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HIGH-SCHOOL LATIN—A NEW PHASE OF AN OLD SUBJECT

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Many articles have appeared recently in defense of the study of the classics, proving their contention by the recital of the achievements of classical students in related or totally different fields of learning. In the majority of cases the articles have shown conclusively by statistics the superiority of classical over non-classical students. For example, the report of the standings of Princeton students recently compiled by Dean West proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the classically trained men far outranked all others, not only in the arts, but also in the scientific courses, the conclusion being drawn that the superiority thus shown was due to the study of the classics and to nothing else. All such articles have one defect which prevents their entire acceptance by all—namely, the fact that opponents of the classics insist on answering with the simple statement, “Granted, but the classical students are better to start with, for only the men with the best minds study the classics anyway, and we should naturally expect them to outrank all others.” To this objection there is no adequate answer so long as the tables of statistics offered in proof are drawn up on the lines ordinarily followed. Only when the question of *original natural ability* is entirely eliminated will this objection be met and the statistics have their full force in support of the classical contention.

The only attempt made to eliminate this factor of natural ability, so far as I know, was in the test of the matter made in the Dorchester High School, the report of whose experiment appeared in the *Classical Journal* of October, 1914. In this case the question of natural ability was eliminated from the outset by selecting two groups of pupils of exactly equal ability as shown by the reports of the term preceding. One of these groups was arbitrarily assigned to German, the other to Latin, the other subjects studied by the

two groups being exactly alike. At the end of the year it was found that the Latin group outranked the German in all lines, showing definitely and conclusively the superiority of the Latin as a means for mind-training. This article is unanswerable. As Professor Holmes of the Division of Education, Harvard University, wrote to Mr. Perkins in a letter quoted in Mr. Perkins' article in the *Journal*, "If it can be shown definitely and in detail, in recorded achievement of pupils, that their study of Latin has done more for them than some substitute has done for *pupils of equal ability*, then the whole discussion of Latin will be finished, once and for all."

To eliminate the question of natural ability from the beginning, by such a plan as was adopted at the Dorchester school, is impossible in the great majority of cases. If, however, we can show in the recorded achievements of pupils *that there is a distinct relation between the standings of pupils in their various subjects and the number of years Latin and Greek have been studied, that the longer the classical studies are pursued the higher is the standing, that there is a direct relation between these two factors, that no substitute for Latin is able to show this relation to such a marked degree*, then the question of natural ability is eliminated in another way. We can, in that case, at once admit that the classical students have the greater natural ability and direct our attack along a different line. Granting that their initial ability is greater, we have merely to show that their advance in other subjects *bears a direct relation* to the number of years the classics are studied, a relation not shown in the case of students who have substituted for Latin some other subject.

Admitting from the outset, then, the greater natural ability of the classical student, this paper will proceed to the proof of the contention stated above. The statistics here presented are based upon a study of the standings of pupils in the Regents' Uniform Examinations in Third-Year English in the East High School, of Rochester, New York, for the five-year period 1909 to 1913 inclusive. As two such examinations are given each year (in January and June), this covers ten examinations, the entire number of papers written being 783. The standings of the papers as revised by the Regents' office were used in obtaining results. The

Third-Year Examination was chosen because it covers definitely all phases of the English work.

The first step in the process consisted in making a complete list of the names of the 783 pupils examined, after each name being entered the standing in the Third-Year English Examination. The school records were then consulted and entry was made of the number of years of Latin, Greek, German, or French each pupil had had at the time of taking the English examination. Thus ordinarily five years was the maximum amount of foreign language, the most common combination being three years of Latin and two of German.

TABLE I

THE ENTIRE 783 PAPERS DIVIDED ON A BASIS OF THE NUMBER OF YEARS
LATIN WAS STUDIED

No. years studied.....	0	1	2	3
No. papers written.....	181	123	220	259
Average standing (percentage)...	65	65	69	76

Since this table is based on the number of years Latin was studied it is evident that the column headed 0 includes not only those pupils who had had no foreign language whatever but also those who had studied German or French one, two, or three years, the average standing for these pupils being 65 per cent. Accordingly, this average is higher than it would be if that column contained a record only of those who had not studied any foreign language, for no defender of the classics would hold that the study of modern languages for two or three years would produce no effect on the ability to handle English. The fact that the 0 and the one-year columns show the same average, 65 per cent, is due to two factors: (1) the one just mentioned, that the average of the 0 column is raised by the two- and three-year modern-language students; (2) the average of the one-year column is lowered by the fact that those pupils who drop Latin at the end of one year are for the most part those who have shown themselves so little adapted to language study that they drop or are requested to drop at that time in spite of the school regulation which requires them to continue a language once begun for at least two years. This second

factor, it will be noted, does not enter in at the end of the second or any other year where the demands of the high-school course or college or normal-school entrance requirements determine what subjects shall be continued and where many of our best as well as our poorer pupils drop. The two-year column shows an increase over the one-year of 4 per cent, while the three-year column shows an increase of 11 per cent. Thus the first step in proof of the proposition that increase in ability is relative to the number of years Latin is studied.

Of course, it may now be said that this table is not a fair test since a large number of pupils in the two- and three-year columns had also studied German or French for one or two years, and these could not be entirely without effect. For this reason Table II is presented in conjunction with Table III, the first representing strictly classical and the second, strictly modern-languages pupils.

TABLE II*

INCLUDES PAPERS OF PUPILS HAVING LATIN ONLY AND NO OTHER
LANGUAGE TO THEIR CREDIT
Total Number of Papers, 167

No. years studied.	0	1	2	3
No. papers written.	28	25	42	72
Average standing (percentage) . .	63	61	69	78

TABLE III*

INCLUDES PAPERS OF PUPILS HAVING GERMAN OR FRENCH ONLY AND NO OTHER
LANGUAGE TO THEIR CREDIT
Total Number of Papers, 176

No. years studied.	0	1	2	3
No. papers written.	28	41	57	50
Average standing (percentage) . .	63	61	65	68

* It is obvious that the 0 columns in these two tables will contain record of exactly the same pupils.

In comparing the averages here given little account should be made of the 0 column, as these 28 pupils were very unusual special students. The fact that the one-year columns both show 61 per cent is nothing remarkable, for, as before stated, this represents the

work of the decidedly poorer pupils in Latin and German who drop or are requested to drop at the end of the first year. While a 10 per cent superiority over the modern-language group is shown by the three-year column of the classical group, the important thing for us here is the *relative advancement*. The classical two-year column shows an advance over the one-year of 8 per cent; the three-year an additional advance of 9 per cent, or a total advance of 17 per cent; the corresponding advance of the modern-language group being 4 per cent, 3 per cent, and 7 per cent.

Tables A, B, and C are complementary to Table I, II, and III respectively, and show the relative standings by years of the number of papers written. From Table A it will be seen that of the 35 papers reaching a 90 per cent standing, 30 were written by pupils having three years of Latin and the other 5 by pupils having two

TABLE A

ACCOMPANIES I; DIVIDED ON A BASIS OF LATIN AND INCLUDING ALL PAPERS
WRITTEN—783 IN NUMBER

No. years studied.....	0	1	2	3
Below 60 per cent.....	58	35	34	10
60 to 69 per cent.....	65	45	76	67
70 to 79 per cent.....	41	36	70	84
80 to 89 per cent.....	17	7	35	68
90 to 100 per cent.....	0	0	5	30

years of Latin to their credit. But here, again, the important point for us is the relation between the advancement and the number of years Latin was studied. Again, the relation is easily seen. The failures drop from 58 to 10, the successes increase in the 70 to 79 per cent grade from 41 to 84, in the 80 to 89 per cent grade from 17 through 35 to 68, in the 90 to 100 per cent grade from 0 to 30. In view of this steady increase it can hardly be said that the rise is due merely to a survival of the fittest, to a dropping off of the poorer pupils. While this may have some effect at the end of the first year, such an influence would be entirely offset at the end of the second year by the fact that at this point many of our best pupils drop because college scientific courses or other valid reasons demand a discontinuing of the subject.

Tables B and C, complementary to II and III, and presented for the same reason as II and III, may now be examined. By a comparison of these it will at once be clear that of the 35 papers above 90 per cent, 13 were written by pupils having three years of Latin *and no other foreign language* to their credit, while not a single modern-language pupil touched the 90 per cent mark and only 13 out of the 148 reached 80 per cent. It will also be noted that

TABLE B
ACCOMPANIES TABLE II—LATIN ONLY

No. years studied	0	1	2	3
Below 60 per cent	13	9	11	2
60 to 69 per cent	11	13	11	15
70 to 79 per cent	3	2	15	23
80 to 89 per cent	1	1	4	19
90 to 100 per cent	0	0	1	13

TABLE C
ACCOMPANIES TABLE III—GERMAN ONLY

No. years studied	0	1	2	3
Below 60 per cent	13	21	21	6
60 to 69 per cent	11	14	19	17
70 to 79 per cent	3	6	13	18
80 to 89 per cent	1	0	4	9
90 to 100 per cent	0	0	0	0

of the 148 papers written by the modern-language group 48 (32 per cent) were failures (i.e., below 60 per cent) and only 13 (9 per cent) reached 80 per cent, while of the 139 written by the Latin group only 22 (16 per cent) were failures and 48 (34 per cent) were above 80 per cent. Advance is shown, to be sure, in the modern-language substitute, but in nowhere near so marked a degree. Turning again to Table B for relation study, the success is again clearly marked, especially in the three higher grades, rising from 3 to 23 in the 70 to 79 per cent grade, from 1 to 19 in the 80 to 89 per cent, and from 0 to 13 in the 90 to 100 per cent grade.

Let me further translate Tables B and C into percentages (Table Y), which are sometimes more convincing, inasmuch as

a careless reader might judge by the relative numbers only and disregard the fact, for example, that the one-year column of Table B totals but 25 papers while the three-year column totals 72. The percentages, therefore, are based each *on the total in its own column*.

TABLE Y
INTERPRETATION OF TABLES B AND C BY PERCENTAGES

No. years studied	B' Latin			C' (German)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Below 60 per cent	36	26	3	51	37	12
60 to 69 per cent	52	26	21	34	33	34
70 to 79 per cent	8	36	32	15	23	36
80 to 89 per cent	4	10	26	0	7	18
90 to 100 per cent	0	2	18	0	0	0
	100	100	100	100	100	100

The failures in the Latin group, it will be noted, drop from 36 per cent of the one-year papers to only 3 per cent of the three-year, while the successes in the 70 to 79 per cent grade rise from 8 per cent to 32 per cent, and in the 80 to 89 per cent grade from 4 per cent to 26 per cent. Also, of the three-year papers 18 per cent were above 90 per cent and 44 per cent (i.e., 26 per cent plus 18 per cent) were above 80 per cent. The same conclusion must be drawn here—that the advance is in proportion to the number of years Latin is studied, and, further, that Latin is more effective than its modern-language substitute.

I have purposely refrained from mentioning the 60 to 69 per cent grade in the tables until this point for the reason that while, on the surface, there appears to be a curious uniformity in that grade in the three tables, A, B, C, the real relation is strikingly brought out in the percentage table B' which shows a drop from 52 in the one-year column to 21 in the three-year. The corresponding modern-language group shows no change; interpreted, this means that the distinctly poorer modern-language pupils are not affected by their modern-language study either one way or the other.

Ordinarily Latin or German is begun in the first, and German, Latin, French, or Greek in the second year, thus making a maximum possibility of five years of foreign language at the end of the third year when the examination in English was taken. Accordingly I add tables made on a five-year basis of the total foreign language taken (Tables IV and D). Again, obviously the 0 column will simply repeat the 0 columns of Tables II and III.

TABLE IV
ON A FIVE-YEAR BASIS OF ALL LANGUAGES

No. years studied.	0	1	2	3	4	5
No. papers written.	28	70	129	157	142	257
Average standing (percentage).	63	62	66	68	71	74

The fact that the five-year column shows an average of 74 per cent rather than the 78 per cent of the three-year column of Table II is due to the modern-language pupils here included, whose average has already been shown to be lower than that of the classical. The evenness of the rise in standing *in relation to the number of years foreign languages were studied* is here remarkably well shown.

TABLE D
TO ACCOMPANY TABLE IV

No. years studied.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Below 60 per cent.	13	32	40	33	11	8
60 to 69 per cent.	11	28	35	53	52	74
70 to 79 per cent.	3	9	39	43	49	88
80 to 89 per cent.	1	1	13	26	25	61
90 to 100 per cent.	0	0	2	2	5	26

From Table D, as from Table A, B, and C, any number of interesting conclusions might be drawn. Note the following: The number of failure papers (below 60 per cent) decreases rapidly after the second year until we have in the five-year column only eight failures out of a total of 257 papers written by five-year pupils. In every other line we have an equally rapid increase, this being

especially noteworthy in the 80 to 90 per cent and the 90 to 100 per cent grades. Note also that of the thirty-five 90 to 100 per cent papers 26 were written by pupils having five years of foreign language to their credit. Further, of these last-named 26 papers 12 were written by Latin-Greek pupils, or, to put it in other terms, 34 per cent of the entire number of 90 to 100 per cent papers were written by Latin-Greek pupils. As these pupils total only 49 in number, this also means that 24 per cent of the Latin-Greek group stood above 90 per cent on the examination in question.

A further analysis of the five-year column gives us some equally interesting results:

1. Average standing of pupils having three years of Latin plus two years of	Per
German or French (184 papers)	cent
2. Average standing of pupils having five years of modern languages only	
(13 papers)	68
3. Average standing of pupils having three years of Latin plus two years	
of Greek (49 papers)	79

The lesson here is self-evident.

In conclusion, let me again emphasize the purpose of this paper. It has not been to show the superiority in other subjects of classical over non-classical students, although this point is readily deduced, but it has been to show that this superiority is *directly in proportion to the number of years the pupil has studied Latin, and that, therefore, the superiority of the classical over the non-classical pupil is due not solely to initial natural ability but to the training he has received in Latin.*